

LOVE'S LAMENTATION

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"I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?"
Malachi 1:2

THE children of Israel had passed through great trouble, but all of it was brought upon them by their own sin. Yet, in their time of trouble, God had remembered them in the greatness of His grace and mercy. They had been carried into captivity in Babylon, and there they had wept when they remembered Zion. They had been scattered over the face of the earth, but God had heard their groanings, and had restored them to their own land, and given them a period of peace and prosperity.

But now that they were cured of idolatry, they fell into self-righteousness, indifference, and worldly mindedness. The ordinances of God's house were neglected, or if they were attended too outwardly, it was in such a careless, heartless manner that God was insulted by their worship rather than adored thereby. For these reasons, new sorrows were caused to fall upon them, for under the old dispensation, it was God's rule that His obedient people were a prosperous people, but that whenever they wandered in heart away from Him, then they began to suffer.

His message to them by Moses was, "If you will walk contrary unto me, I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins," and so they found it. They were, therefore, now in a very sad condition, but they had no consciousness of the real cause of it. They were fretting and fuming against God instead of striking out boldly at their sins—complaining of the severity of the divine chastisement rather than confessing the iniquity by which they had brought the rod upon themselves.

So God sent His servant Malachi, the last of a long train of prophets, to seek to bring them to repentance—to try to touch their hearts and consciences by reminding them of His manifold favors, and of their base ingratitude towards Him who had treated them so graciously, and with such undeserved mercy. This is to be the subject of my discourse, I want if I can, to get at men's hearts. I shall not have much to say by way of instruction, I want rather to speak so as to impress and arouse my hearers, seeking to set your consciences at work so that all of us—for I hope there will be something to touch us all—may be constrained to bow before God in true repentance, and with genuine confession of sin.

The text seems to me to contain two things, and to suggest a third. First, here is *the lamentation of love*, "I have loved you, saith the LORD." Secondly, here is *the insensibility of ingratitude*, "Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?" They would not see any signs and tokens of God's love, for they did not believe in it. And the third thing, on which I am going to speak, is *the discoveries of grace*, for though it is not in the text, the text leads us to think of it, and the fifth verse tells us of it, "Your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel."

I. Our first theme then, is to be, THE LAMENTATION OF LOVE, "I have loved you, saith the LORD."

The lamentation is abrupt, and appears to end without completing its own sense. It is the exclamation of unrequited affection, "I have loved you, saith the LORD." It is a sorrowful lament, as the eye of God rests on His rebellious people, He seems to say to them, "You are acting thus wickedly against Me, yet I have loved you. You offer polluted bread upon Mine altar, you bring the blind, and the lame, and the sick, as sacrifices unto Me, and thus you treat Me with derision, yet I have never treated *you* so, for 'I

have loved you, saith the LORD,” as if He were about to say a great deal more, but suddenly stopped. His grief would not let Him say more, so the sentence stands in its rugged majesty of pathos, “I have loved you, saith the LORD.”

Taking this expression first, in its lowest sense, namely, *the love of benevolence*, it applies to all mankind. The Lord can still say, to those who forget Him, and care nothing for Him, “I have loved you.” Great masses of mankind live as if there were no God. If God were really dead, it would, apparently, not make the slightest difference in their thoughts and feelings. They are, practically, dead to Him, and they act as if He were dead to them.

The Lord seems to me to be speaking to some of you, who never appear to have any thought about Him, and He says to you, “I have treated you lovingly. I have permitted you to live, and kept you in being, you are not suffering pain, the blood leaps in your veins, you are in robust and vigorous health, yet, alas! you are spending that strength in sin. Your children have been spared to you, your house is replete with comfort, and you have no little satisfaction in the things of this life.

I gave you all these things—your corn, and your wine, and your oil—and I have clothed you, and kept you alive. Shall I still keep on loving you in this fashion, loading you with benefits, causing you to prosper, giving you all that heart can wish, and will you in return continue to be hard, and cold, and indifferent to Me? Must I still be your Benefactor, and you remain an ingrate? Must I, from morning to night, and from night to morning, visit you with kindness, and shall I never have anything from you but sullen silence and heartless indifference?”

There are some of you who have been so prospered in the things of this world, and who have been made so happy in your homes, that you ought to love the Lord who has done such great things for you, and He seems to say to you, through my lips, “I have loved you, will you never remember Me, never thank Me, never give yourself up to Me, never accept Me as your Father and your Friend?” It is a natural and just lament of love that it should have done all this, and yet should be requited by forgetfulness.

Certain men, however, go further than simply forgetting God, for they actively oppose Him. They can never seem to find language foul enough to apply to the religion of Jesus Christ. Those who are zealous on behalf of religion are described by them as cants, and hypocrites, and I know not what besides, and anything like conscientiousness is ridiculed by them as Phariseism. They know better, but that is the way in which they oppose God, yet as He looks upon them in pity, He can say to them, “I have loved you. You oppose Me, but why do you act so?”

When our Lord Jesus was upon the earth, and the Jews took up stones again to stone Him, He said to them, “Many good works have I shewed you from My Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?” He had healed their sick, satisfied their hunger, and bestowed upon them countless boons, yet again and again, they took up stones to stone Him, so He said to them, “Why do ye act thus towards me?”

And God might speak to many of you in similar style and say, “I have dealt with you in love, and you have scoffed at Me, and opposed Me, but I have only met your opposition with a still greater display of love. With a strange perseverance of unappreciated and unrequited love, I have still pursued you, then why do you rebel against Me as you do?”

I might speak to some of you in another strain. O sir, your mother died rejoicing in hope, then why do you hate that Christ who was her joy and delight? Has the Lord Jesus Christ ever made your children become unkind to you? Has He ever been the means of any wrong being done to you? You know that it has not been so, but that all His influence among the sons of men has been for the good of the whole commonwealth, and for the establishment of peace and righteousness the wide world over.

Why then, do men oppose Him so fiercely? Some of them seem almost to foam at the mouth whenever they mention His sacred name. Well may He, then, as He looks upon the atheist and the Socinian, say to them, as He says to so many more, “I have treated you with love, yet this is the only return I receive from you. Shall it always be so?”

The same expression may be used concerning the many who have long heard the Gospel, and who yet remain unsaved. Now I can speak personally to a great many of you who are here. God has indeed shown His love to you in permitting you to meet with us in this house of prayer. You might have been born in some far off country, where you would have been taught the abominations of Paganism, or Romanism, or Mohammedanism. The name of Jesus might never have been sounded in your ears, yet it has been, and with many of you, from your very childhood.

I will not speak in praise of my own ministry, but I will say this—I have always preached the Gospel to the best of my ability. All that I have known of the Word of God, I have spoken, and I have tried to use the best words that I could get together in proclaiming the Gospel message, and seeing that so many hundreds, and even thousands, have found the Lord Jesus Christ here, I am right in saying that you have been in a highly privileged place.

You have had opportunities given to you which are denied to a great many people, and God has proved that He has loved you in giving you such privileges. If you still remain hearers only, and not doers of the Word, I can fancy my Lord and Master weeping over you, as He wept over Jerusalem, when He said, “How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!”

The words of our text will also be applicable to many when they come to die. When God comes to look back upon the whole of a man's life, and to recall the way in which He has treated that man from the first day of his history to the last, He will be able to say to many a man who will die unregenerate, “Yet, I loved you. I put you into the arms of a woman who taught you to fear My name, I placed you in circumstances that ought to have led you to thought, to prayer, to repentance, and to faith, I have preserved your life and cared for you, until now that you lie there dying, and you will be lost because of despised mercy and unrequited love.”

“I called, but you refused, I stretched out My hand, but ye regarded not, and now you are lost, and must be driven away from My presence forever—not because I treated you roughly, or denied to you the message of salvation, or shut you out of heaven, but because ye yourselves spurned My love, and set at nothing all My entreaties.”

I think I told you once, the story of a godly woman who was wonderfully kind to her very unkind and wicked husband. She was so obedient, and gentle, and affectionate, and patient, that he even boasted about what a good wife he had, and in company one night, long past the hour of midnight, he said that if he took his drunken companions home with him, late as it was, she would receive them like a lady, and prepare a supper for them, and never show by word or sign that it was hard upon her, or that they were not welcome.

And it came true, when he took them home, she got together such things as she had, and made a decent feast for them, and one of them addressed her afterwards, and said that they had come there as the result of a wager, and they could not understand how she could have patience with such a man as her husband was, for they themselves felt ashamed of the way he had acted towards her. When they pressed her for her answer, she said, with tears “I am afraid that my husband's only happiness will be in this life, I have prayed for him, and sought in vain to bring him to a better mind, but my fear is that when this life is over, there will be no more happiness for him, so I mean to make him as happy as he can be in his present condition.”

It seems to me that God sometimes acts upon that plan, for He gives to some men more than heart can wish, their eyes stand out with fatness, and He multiplies to them all earthly blessings, because He is a God who would make men as happy as they can be, so He will let them have happiness here, for in the eternity to come, it will not be possible for His justice to deal out anything to them but those sorrows which are the inevitable consequence of perseverance in sin.

Even in this first part of my theme, there seems to me to be much that ought to touch many hearts, but when I come to *the higher sense of the term “love,”* and speak of God's own chosen people, to whom He can with emphasis say, “I have loved you,” oh, how sad it is that the Lord has to often say this

to them while they are in their unregenerate state! He has chosen them unto eternal life, He has written their names in the Lamb's book of life, His well-beloved Son has already bought them with His precious blood, yet look at them—slaves to lust, rioting in sin, or merely hearers of the Word, but not doers of it, still rejecting the Savior, and continually going from bad to worse.

Oh, could someone only echo in their ears this little message of God, "I have loved you," could they—would they—remain as they are, without the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, or any desire to be drawn towards Him? God knows all about His eternal love towards them, and the choice that He has made of them, and often must He say, as He beholds their heart of stone, and brow of brass, and neck of steel, "Yes, I have loved you, O you poor foolish creatures, and you shall yet be Mine, and shall sing among the angels, though now you are rioting in sin, and reveling in iniquity!" I think I hear the Lord thus graciously expressing the inmost feelings of His heart, and the very repetition of the message ought to touch all our hearts.

But further, think how the Lord must express Himself, in a similar style, concerning wandering backsliders. There are some whom we have every reason to regard as His people. In times past, they have given abundant evidence that they were His, but they have grown spiritually cold, as if a death-chill had struck them in their heart.

They have apparently gone back to the world, and they are now far off from the place where they used to be, but the Lord looks upon them in their wretchedness and sin, and He says to them, "I have loved you. You may be trying to live without prayer, but I have loved you. You may have ceased to frequent the house of God, but I have loved you. 'I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.' 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.' 'Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you.'"

"The LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away." He has not sued for a divorce from His unfaithful spouse, as He might well have done. "Only acknowledge thine iniquity," saith He, "confess that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and thou shalt be fully and freely forgiven, for I have loved thee."

I pray that my blessed Master may Himself speak to any poor backslider who is here, for surely, His gentle, gracious accents ought to melt even a heart of stone. If you ever were really His, however far you may have wandered from Him, do not hesitate to come back to Him, for He still saith to you, "I have loved you."

Yes, dear friends, whenever any of the Lord's people get into a sad, lean, low condition—when they begin to grow cold, and to doubt whether they can be the children of God at all, it is well for them to hear the great Father say to them, again and again, "I have loved you, I have loved you, I have loved you. I, who made the heavens and the earth, have loved you, I have loved you from before the foundation of the world. I have not merely pitied you, as a man might pity a starving dog, but I have loved you with all My heart. I have loved many others beside you, but still, I have as much love for you as if there were nobody else for Me to love in all the world."

Surely God will cause this simple but most comforting truth to come home to the hearts of His people, and then they will cry, "We will arise, and go to our Father, and confess our wanderings and our sins, that we may once more be at peace with Him."

Are you, dear friend, very sorrowful just now? Have you lost the light of God's countenance? Are you sighing and crying for the peace you once enjoyed? Well, then, just do what I have been bidding the sinner do. Come to Christ all over again, and at the same time, make diligent inquiry to find out whether there is any wrong thing in your character that is bringing you into this state of misery.

How long is it since you have thoroughly swept out the secret chambers of your heart? If you leave a room unswept for a little while, you know how the cobwebs and the dust gather and settle all over it. Look even at the snow after it has been lying for a day or two in such a foggy, smoky, grimy city as this,

it is positively black. Well, if the snow gets black in this smoke, do you not think that your soul will also get foul and dirty? This world is a bad place to live in. To maintain a high condition of purity, you will need a deal of grace, or you certainly will not do it.

Ah, me! How little there is around us that can help us toward God, and how much there is to draw us away from Him! Now, because of all this impurity by which you are surrounded, your soul needs to be constantly swept out. You had need cry to the Holy Spirit to light the candle, and frequently sweep out the room, for unless there is a constant cleansing, there will be continual filth, and the heart will never be fit for Christ to come into it, and to abide in it.

So much then, concerning the lamentation of love.

II. Now, in the second place, I have to speak upon THE INSENSIBILITY OF INGRATITUDE.

That is a very cruel answer in our text, can you detect the heartless ingratitude in it? I am afraid I do not know how to pronounce the words aright so as to bring out all the evil that is in them. First, you hear God saying in very plaintive tones, "I have loved you," and then, instead of that declaration touching the hearts of those who had wandered from Him, and causing them to ask for mercy at His hands, you get this wicked question, "Wherein hast thou loved us?" That is all the reply they give, it is short and sharp, full of unbelief, and pride, and rebellion, "Wherein hast thou loved us?" Does anybody ever ask that question of God nowadays? Oh, yes! I have heard it many times.

That question is sometimes asked by *men who are loaded with temporal mercies*. There is nothing that God has denied to them. When they were younger, if anybody had told them that they would be worth as much as they now actually possess, they would have said that it was beyond their utmost expectations, yet now that they have all that their heart can desire, and their eyes stand out with fatness, they put to God this shameful question, "Wherein hast thou loved us?"

They say that they cannot see any sign of the goodness of God in their prosperity, they trace all their riches and their increase to their own wit, and wisdom, and industry, and perseverance, but they leave God out of the matter altogether. And so, although His mercies stare them in the face, and they wear the tokens of those mercies on their backs, and carry them within their physical frame, yet they continue to say to Him, "Wherein hast thou loved us?"

I have known others who have practically said the same thing *by the way in which they have slighted Gospel privileges*. A man of this stamp, who has been a hearer of the Gospel for perhaps twenty or thirty years, yet says, "I do not see any proofs of any particular favor that God has shown to me." O sir, if you had been cast into hell, you would have learned to prize the privilege of listening to the Gospel when you had lost it forever! If you had been, for even a little while, in a lunatic asylum, you might, when you come out, begin rightly to value the blessing of restored reason, with which you are able to understand at least something of that Gospel which you have so long neglected and despised.

It is strange that there should be people living on praying ground, and on pleading terms with God, with heaven to be had for the asking, who yet say to the Lord, "Wherein hast thou loved us?" Ah, sirs! some of you see what kings and prophets desired to see, but died without the sight, yet you say to God, "Wherein hast thou loved us?" How happy ought to be your ears, that hear the Gospel's joyful sound, yet, as you hear it not in your hearts, you cry to the Lord, "Wherein hast thou loved us?"

Yes, and I have heard this question put very bitterly by *some who have murmured at their temporal trials*. "How has God been gracious to us?" say they. "Look at me," says one, "I am very poor, I work as hard as any slave, yet I get but little return for all my toil, and my lot is a truly pitiable one. In what respects has God loved me?" "Look," says another, "at this broken leg," or perhaps the lament is, "I was born deformed," or "I lost an eye early in life, don't talk to me about God loving me."

Yet there are many, now in heaven, who might never have gone there if it had not been for their poverty, their infirmity, and their pain. Often when God is hedging up a man's way with thorns, to stop him from going to destruction, he thinks that the Lord is unkind to him, whereas the thorns in the way are the surest tokens of divine love to him. Yes, sir, you were once able to drink greedily from the muddy stream of worldly pleasure, and you kept on at it as long as you could. I do not know where you

might have been by this time, had not God struck you down, taken away your power of enjoyment, and deprived you of the means by which you indulged yourself in sin. What better service could He have rendered to you? The silly, self-willed child will not thank his father for the rod, but when he becomes a man, if that rod has been really useful to him, he will respect and love the wise and kind father who did not spare him for all his crying.

And you, dear friend, who are in trouble and sorrow, say that God is dealing harshly with you, yet those trials are all sent in love. That sharp affliction of yours is the surgeon's knife that is cutting away the proud flesh and deadly cancers which otherwise would destroy you. God is working for your good in all that He is doing, it is His love that is doing it all.

I am sorry to say that I have known some, who appeared to be the Lord's people, who have said to Him, "Wherein hast thou loved us?" because they have become very doubting, they have not looked at eternal things, they have kept looking at their outward inconveniences and sorrows. The poor man has said, "With this leaky roof to my cottage, can God really love me?" And the poor woman has said, "With this rheumatism in my aching bones, and my poor little children half clad and ill fed, can God really love me?"

And even the heirs of heaven have sometimes asked of God, "Wherein hast thou loved us?" But when they have come back to their right mind, and have rightly understood the ways of the Lord, they have blessed Him for their troubles as much as for their joys, and they have seen how all things work together for good to them that love God.

It shows how wrong is the state of our heart if we can live in the midst of God's continued mercies, and yet cannot realize that He loves us. If any of you cannot see any tokens of the benevolence and goodness of God to you, surely you must be blind, and if, dear child of God, you fail to perceive what the Lord has done for you, anoint your eyes with eye salve that you may see, for He has done everything for you. He has given you this world, and worlds to come.

Ay, and He has given Himself to you, to be your Father; His Son, to be your Savior; His Spirit, to be your constant Comforter. What more can He do for you than He has done, you who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before you in the Gospel? Therefore, never let this thought flit across your soul, and never let this question pass the door of your lips, "Wherein hast thou loved us?"

Thus have I spoken upon the insensibility of ingratitude as well as the lamentation of love.

III. Now, lastly, I have to speak for just a few minutes, upon THE DISCOVERIES OF GRACE.

I am hoping and praying that these last words, which I am about to utter, may come true in the experience of a great many in this place, as well as of others who will read the discourse when it is printed.

Suppose you should be converted—become a child of God, and be saved—the first thing you will discover will be, that *God has loved you*. What a change that will make in all your feelings towards Him! You will never again say to the Lord, "Wherein hast thou loved me?" but if you feel as I did when I first found out the love of God to me, you will begin tracing your whole history, from your cradle up to the moment of your conversion, and you will say, "I can see the Lord's loving hand there, and there, and there, and there, and there."

You will look upon your trials, your losses, your crosses, your removals from one village or town to another, and you will say, "Ah! it was love that watched over me all the while, it was love that was arranging all that happened for my good." And you will be amazed at the difference that feeling will make in your life. Before you knew the Lord, you could not realize His love, but as soon as ever you really know Him, you will say, "All His dealings with me have been proofs of His love."

You will put up your hands in wonder and say, "How could I have been such a mad fool as to go on sinning against God in spite of such wondrous love? It really seems to me now as if, the more I sinned, the more He loved me, and the worse I was to Him, the better He was to me. Over against my black sin, He set the whiteness and brightness of His grace, and He seemed as if He conquered me, not by the sheer force of His might, but by the superior power of His boundless love."

Further, if you shall be converted, you will not be long before you will find out that, in addition to God being loving and kind to you in His providence, *He so loved you that He gave His only begotten Son to die for you*. The general truth that Christ died for sinners, is unspeakably precious, but the sweetest truth in all the world is, for any of us to be able to say, "He died *for me*."

O my dear hearer, if you were ever to find out that Christ thought of you in His last moments upon the cross—that He distinctly and personally poured out His life for you, and that your name—I mean, your very own name—is graven upon the palms of His hands, and that you, in your own person, are continually before Him, surely that would be a heartbreaker for you.

All the law and the terrors in the world might only harden you in your rebellion, but one glance of the dear languid eyes of Him who hung upon the cross—one gracious look of His—will make your spirit flow like the streams of water that ran out of the rock in the wilderness. May the Lord, in His mercy, enable each one of you to say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me," for then you will soon be at His feet as weeping yet rejoicing penitents.

Again, if you are really converted, so that you come to know the love of God, and the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, another thing which you will soon find out will be *God's election of you from eternity*. How well I recollect when first that ray of light struck into my soul, as I seemed to hear Him say to me personally, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

That great truth was revealed to me in this way. I said to myself, "Here am I converted, pardoned, saved. There are my school fellows, the boys and young men with whom I used to be associated, they are not saved. Who has made the difference between us?" I dared not say that I had, and so put the crown of salvation on my own head. I saw, in a single moment, that God must have made the distinction if I was in any degree whatever, different from my fellow creatures.

Then I said to myself, "If God has made this difference in me, and done more for me than He has done for others, there must always have been, in His heart, thoughts of love towards my soul, since He never changes. What He does today, is the result of the purpose which was in His heart from before the foundation of the world." So there rolled into my heart, like a stream of honey, the assurance that He had loved me, with complacency, long before the earth was formed, or the day star knew its place, or planets ran their round.

Then I said to myself, "O you fool of fools, that you should ever have treated your God as you have done! Are you indeed one of His elect and chosen people, and yet have you lived all these years without hardly a thought of Him who has loved you from eternity?" I blamed myself, as I do still, that I was so slow to recognize His eternal choice of me, and if the Lord shall be pleased to say to you, in the words of my text, "I have loved you"—when you once really know His love to you, His redemption of you, and His election of you personally, you will no more say, "Wherein hast thou loved me?" but you will bow, in speechless but grateful reverence, at His dear feet, worshipping and adoring the greatness of His infinite love.

I do not know how you feel, brethren and sisters who know the Lord, but I feel that, if I could live a thousand lives, I would like to live them all for Christ, and I should even then feel that they were all too little a return for His great love to me. And if any of us could have grace and strength enough given to us to die a thousand deaths for Christ, He well deserves them for having loved us as He has done.

There are just two things that I want to say to you, and with them I will finish my discourse.

First, some of you are still living in sin. Perhaps you hardly know why you came to the Tabernacle tonight, possibly it was only out of curiosity. I am no thought-reader or mind-reader, but I can imagine that some of you have been in the habit of pooh-poohing all religion, ridiculing it, and you have done so for a long while.

Now, suppose that, one of these days, you should preach the very faith which now you despise, just as the apostle Paul did. Do not utter more words than you can help, in reply to this suggestion of mine, for you will have to eat them up, however many there are of them. Do not go any further in the wrong

road than you can help, because you will have to come all that way back. I dare to tell you, in my Master's name, that some of you, who hate Him, will love Him before long, though now you oppose Him all you can, by and by you will be among the first to vindicate His cause. My Lord knows all about you, and as He has bought you with His precious blood, do you think He will not claim you as His own?

He has written your name in His book of life, so the devil himself, and all his legions, cannot take from you the life everlasting to which His predestinating grace has ordained you. You shall yet bow down before Him. The day draws nigh when you, who now talk in a hectoring fashion now, will be found lying at His feet as suppliants. Then, when He has drawn you to Himself, and has favored you with much of His love, when one of these Sabbath nights you shall be found sitting at His table, and the spikenard shall give forth a sweet smell, and your very soul shall seem to be carried away to heaven because of the presence of your Beloved, I wonder what you will think of yourself then?

Suppose He were then to whisper in your ear—I know He will not do so—but suppose He were to remind you of all your ill behavior towards Him—He will not do so, because He gives liberally, and upbraids not—but suppose your own memory should be your accuser, and should say to you, “Remember that you were a bond slave in the land of Egypt. Recollect those black sins that came out of your heart, those foul words that issued from your lips”—do you not think that, as you look up into the face of Jesus, your Lord and Master, you will say, “Ah, my gracious Savior, I have thought of a fresh reason for loving You. I knew it before, but it has come home to me more vividly now than ever, should not they love most who have had most forgiven? That is my case, my Lord, therefore, bind me to Yourself, and let me never again wander away from You, but let me love You even to the end.”

And lastly, dear friends, I wonder what we shall think of ourselves when we get away from communion with the saints on earth, and sit up yonder with our Savior in heaven. There is one who was once a drunkard, what a strange thing it will be for him to find himself in heaven! Here he was stuttering and stammering, and could not speak plainly, because of his drunkenness, but he has been washed and cleansed in the blood of Jesus, and there he is singing more sweetly even than the angels. Would you believe it? That very man up there—that bright spirit, robed in white, who sings the loudest of them all, used to curse and swear, and ill-treat his wife because she went to the house of God, yet there he is, purified and glorified. See what sovereign grace can do! But what must he think of himself when he gets up there?

I was trying to imagine what must be the emotion of such a man as Paul, who had been a persecutor, and injurious, when he looks into the face of his dear Lord and Master, and casts his crown before Him, and yet all the while thinks, “But I persecuted Him!” I wonder whether that man is there, who pierced His side, and those soldiers who nailed Him to the tree. Certainly, he is there who railed at Him on the cross, and then repented and was forgiven, and he is there who said, “I know not the man.” When they are singing, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing,”

I think that sometimes, Peter pauses a while, and those around wonder why Peter has left off singing, but he cannot help it. Emotions of unutterable gratitude are coming over him as he remembers that he has been forgiven through the wondrous grace of Christ, who loved him even when He was being denied by him with oaths and curses.

I wish that I could communicate to you the emotions of my own spirit as I think of the greatness of man's sin, and set it side by side with the greatness of God's grace—as I think of love unspeakable, and of sin unutterably vile which that love puts away. Come, dear friends, and let us all join together to bless and magnify the wondrous love which God has revealed to us in His Word, and may we all meet in heaven, to the praise of the glory of His grace, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—561, 579, 735

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